

Kowaliga Academy and Industrial Institute, Kowaliga, Ala.

William E. Benson, President

LOCATED about forty miles north of Montgomery, and sixteen miles from any railroad. It is not a town, neither is it a village. Founded by Wm. E. Benson, its present president, it is established "to train and higher educate the work-



WM. E. BENSON

President of Kowaliga Academy and Industrial Institute

men and fit them for the life they are to lead at home." At the same time it is established to show students who desire a better education, a knowledge that will fit them for the academy and industrial schools. President Benson is a young colored man whose father has a successful farm in Alabama. The young man conceived the idea that his father's farm might be used in helping the Negroes of his community to better their condition. After graduation from Howard University in Washington, he returned home with the object of establishing there a school similar to Tuskegee. He combined the teaching of the hand with that of the head and heart. He is succeeding in establishing an industrious and land-holding community of Negroes at Kowaliga.

Property Destroyed by Fire in 1909

Two hundred and eighty-three students and eleven teachers were enrolled in 1908. The school owned five buildings, valued at \$20,000, in which academic, manual training, and domestic departments were conducted. While President Benson was in the North, in January, 1909, four of the principal

school buildings were destroyed by fire. An appeal has been issued for funds to rebuild the school buildings, and to continue the work of the Institute.

"The Dixie Industrial Company"

The Dixie Industrial Company, incorporated 1900, develops self-reliance, and demonstrates what an intelligent and industrial Negro community ought to be. The company has a paid-up capital of \$53,000, owns nine acres of splendid farm and timber land, has built eighteen cottages and leased forty farms. Operates five shingle mills, and gives employment to nearly 300 Negroes, and is making a success of the "Industrial Settlement" idea.

President Benson says: "The best help is self-help, and I cannot conceive of any wiser philanthropy than that which will put needy Southern communities on their feet, and at the same time pay legitimate dividends on money invested. Northern charity can do nothing more than to help the Negro out of his extremity; his further advancement must come through the Negro himself."

Seasonal Industries

Emphasizing the value of self-help, President Benson calls attention to the fact that 75 per cent of the Negroes are in the rural districts and live mainly by raising cotton. This keeps them busy, however, only six months in the year, with the other six months spent in idleness. This idleness is the chief source of crime and poverty. The Kowaliga plan aims to solve this problem by providing "seasonal industries" which will furnish employment to the members of the community the other half of the year when they are not employed in their farms. This enables the community to develop its natural resources in conjunction with its agricultural possibilities, providing steady employment the year round for the farm population and enables the farmers themselves to double their earning capacity by turning into money that part of their time which would otherwise be wasted.

The Dixie Industrial Company, through its saw-mill, turpentine-still, cotton-ginnery, fertilizer-mill, and auxiliary industries, furnishes work to the farmers of the neighborhood as soon as their farm-work is over and pays them good wages. The annual earning capacity of the community has been increased by \$20,000 in six years through the employment of time that was formerly wasted in idleness.